

People Directorate

Depute Chief Executive and Director - People: Douglas Hutchison

County Buildings
Wellington Square
Ayr
KA7 1DR

Our Ref: DH/LD

Your Ref:

Date: 10 June 2020



Dear Parent / Carer,

The First Minister has outlined a phased approach to lifting the restrictions on lockdown across Scotland. I want to keep you up to date on what this means here in South Ayrshire. Firstly, I would like to say thank you to you and our children and young people for working with teachers and practitioners to continue learning through online support and learning packs during what has been a challenging period. I will now set out what is planned in the weeks and months ahead.

June 2020

Scottish Government stated that from the 1st of June, schools could be open to staff preparing for the return in August. We have taken the first week in June to ensure buildings are safe and clean for staff to return. During the week beginning **8th June** head teachers and senior staff can return to school for planning and to meet individual staff or groups of staff. From the **15th June** onwards all staff in schools may return, but only for specific purposes such as planning and preparation for the new session in August. In addition, schools may have a small number of pupils in school for transition. However, the time available for such transition visits is very short and may focus on those children who need it most. Schools will close as normal for the summer holiday on the **26th of June** with online and distance learning provided by schools and early years centres coming to an end on the 26th June for the summer holiday. Over the summer holiday period we will continue to provide food boxes to those who need them most. Please let the school / early years centre know if you no longer require a food box delivered over the summer.

August 2020

The new school session will begin for all pupils on **Wednesday 12th August**. This is a week earlier than planned and is a Scottish Government decision and we will issue updated school holiday dates soon. Schools and early years centres are currently planning for the 'rotation' system that will need to operate when they return. The preferred rotation for primary schools and early years centres is a two group rotation, supported by 66% of parents who completed the recent survey. At present we are able to confirm that 30 of our primary schools and all four of our standalone early years centres are able to accommodate a two group rotation or, in a few very small schools, all pupils at one time. At present, 12 of our primary schools may have a three group rotation due to limitations on space available and staff available. Some larger primary schools would require a significant number of additional teachers and teaching spaces to achieve a two group rotation. I realise there is a sense of frustration and unfairness in the rotations, but can assure you that everything possible is being done to achieve the maximum number of pupils in schools. A number of complaints have been received about this issue, but there will be no change in the current position. I am hopeful that this will be a temporary measure and will only be in place for as long as needed. I understand that this will be challenging for families and they will be making adjustments for work and childcare arrangements. At the first possible opportunity when we are allowed to amend any of the social distancing measures in place, we will do so to allow more children to be physically present in schools. Schools will work hard to ensure family groups attend on the same rotation but it will be almost impossible to account for parents' working patterns. The more detailed information about your child's pattern of attendance will come directly from your school or early years centre.

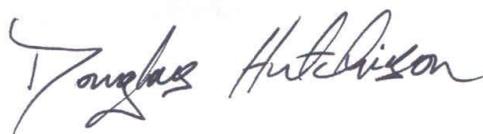
Childcare

During the school closure we have provided free childcare for key workers where both adults in the household are key workers. Childcare will continue to be provided as required by Scottish Government over the summer holiday but this should only be used as a last resort. We are currently considering options for the period from August onwards and will provide the details prior to schools returning in August.

Health and safety

The safety of your children and our staff remains a central part of any planning for the return to school. Our overriding priority remains to suppress the spread of the virus. Schools will operate differently including drop off and pick up arrangements. The detail will come directly from the school / early years centre and I know you will continue to support your school / early years centre to ensure the school community is safe and continues to thrive.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Douglas Hutchison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'D'.

Douglas Hutchison
Depute Chief Executive and Director - People